Chief Joseph’s Father’s Message:

Joseph the Younger succeeded his father as leader of the Wallowa band in 1871. Before his death, the latter counseled his son:

"My son, my body is returning to my mother earth, and my spirit is going very soon to see the Great Spirit Chief. When I am gone, think of your country. You are the chief of these people. They look to you to guide them. Always remember that your father never sold his country. You must stop your ears whenever you are asked to sign a treaty selling your home. A few years more and white men will be all around you. They have their eyes on this land. My son, never forget my dying words. This country holds your father's body. Never sell the bones of your father and your mother."

Joseph commented "I clasped my father's hand and promised to do as he asked. A man who would not defend his father's grave is worse than a wild beast."